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Sen. Van Woerkom applauds funding to fight emerald ash borer

LANSING – State Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores, today applauded the hard work of U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Holland, in securing funds to fight the emerald ash borer, an insect threatening the ash tree population in West Michigan.

“This funding will greatly aid our battle against this invader,” Van Woerkom said. “This insect has caused extensive damage in Southeast Michigan and we must dedicate ourselves to eliminating it and protecting the ash trees of West Michigan.”

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism, chaired by Van Woerkom, held hearings last year to help first draw attention to this problem.

Recently, Hoekstra announced the emerald ash borer eradication program will receive an additional \$28 million in emergency funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Earlier this year the USDA provided \$15.2 million in emergency funding for the program through April. The additional funding raises the total to \$43.4 million. The funds will be used for removal of infested trees, targeting of surveillance activities and quarantine enforcement.

An exotic insect from Asia, the emerald ash borer was detected in Michigan in the summer of 2002 and is responsible for killing or damaging millions of ash trees in Southeast Michigan. The emerald ash borer has since been discovered in Ohio, Maryland and Virginia.

To control and prevent any further spread, the Michigan Department of Agriculture issued quarantine on all ash trees and ash wood products, including firewood, in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Washtenaw, Wayne, Genesee, Ingham, Jackson, Lapeer, Lenawee, Shiawassee and St. Clair counties. Under the quarantine, it is illegal to move ash trees, branches, lumber, firewood and wood chips larger than one inch in diameter outside the six counties.

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